



(AS DELIVERED)

Allow me to briefly touch on several key highlights of the report.

Firstly, the report notes that while the so-called ISIL “caliphate” has suffered significant losses, it remains a serious and significant concern. Since the end of 2017, ISIL has been defeated in Iraq and is in headlong retreat in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Overall current ISIL membership in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic is estimated at more than 20,000, split fairly evenly between the two countries. Some ISIL fighters are fully engaged militarily, others concealed in sympathetic communities and urban areas. ISIL has also decentralized its leadership structure to mitigate further losses.

Therefore, an ISIL core is likely to survive in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in the medium term, due to the ongoing conflict and complex stabilization challenges. In addition, significant ISIL-affiliated numbers also exist in Afghanistan, South-East Asia, West Africa and Libya, and to a lesser extent in Sinai, Yemen, Somalia and the Sahel.

Secondly, the challenge posed by returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) remains complex. The flow of FTFs towards ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic has essentially come to a halt.

However, the reverse flow, although slower than anticipated, remains a serious challenge. Moreover, the rising threat from ISIL’s global network, particularly from FTFs, will be diverse and hard to predict. For example, the report notes that one of the dangers posed by returning FTFs is expertise gained in the conflict zones such as skills to prepare improvised explosive devices and weaponize drones.

Thirdly

(AS DELIVERED)

The report highlights that Member States and the international community must renew their efforts to effectively counter the rapidly evolving and transnational threat from ISIL. It also notes that the role of the Security Council has been instrumental in this regard, especially through the various resolutions it has adopted over the last few years on the different aspects of countering terrorism, as well as on the threat posed by ISIL. The ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions List also remains one of the key global instruments in this effort.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General's seventh Report also provides updates on how the UN system is strengthening the coordination, coherence and effectiveness of its counter-terrorism efforts in support of Member States.

It highlights the work being done by various UN entities, in particular the close partnership between my Office (UNOCT) and CTED, and in collaboration with other entities such as UNODC, UNESCO, OHCHR and UN Women.

Together, the UN system is striving to address critical aspects such as countering the financing of terrorism, organized crime, border management and law enforcement, international judicial cooperation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration, and countering terrorist narratives and engaging communities.

In particular, United Nations counter-terrorism bodies have continued to focus on the FTF phenomenon. The United Nations Foreign Terrorist Fighters Capacity Building Implementation Plan steered by UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and CTED has been updated and streamlined to reflect the priorities identified in Security Council resolution 2396. It now consists of 40 projects, to be implemented by 12 UN entities. Over 20 of the 40 projects focus specifically on returning and relocating FTFs.

To counter the threat posed by ISIL and terrorism more broadly, international cooperation, information sharing and capacity-building are critical. Moreover, the growing sophistication of methods used by terrorists, require countermeasures, particularly technological ones, that are similarly complex and advanced. All these topics were discussed by Member States at the High-Level Conference of Head of Counter-Terrorism Agencies held in last June on the initiative of Secretary-General Guterres.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General remains firmly committed to supporting Member States in the fight against terrorism, including ISIL and its affiliates. In particular, he welcomes the Security Council's continued attention to this matter as it is only through a sustained and concerted multilateral response that we can address the scourge of terrorism.

Mr. President,

(AS DELIVERED)

As discussed with the United Kingdom Mission in its capacity as President of the Security Council, I am also availing this opportunity to brief the Council on my visit to Afghanistan last week.

I travelled to Kabul on 14-15 August to participate in a conference organized by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. The Government of Afghanistan played a leading role in establishing this annual International Day of Remembrance on 21 August, through a General Assembly resolution (72/165).

In my keynote speech at the conference, I emphasized the need for solidarity with terrorist victims in Afghanistan and around the world.

I reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to listen to the victims of terrorism, respect their rights and provide them with support and justice.

I also met with a large group of victims from across Afghanistan, who told me about the devastating impact of terrorism on their lives.

